IN THE CLAIMS

Claims 1-4 (Canceled).

5 (Original). A method comprising:

allowing at least two software clients to use a connection to the Internet at the same time;

determining when both clients have released the connection; and

discontinuing the connection when both clients have released the connection.

6 (Original). The method of claim 5 including enabling said clients to connect to the Internet through a software layer and using the layer to accommodate at least two different types of Internet connections.

7 (Original). The method of claim 5 including monitoring the connection so that the connection is not released until all clients using the connection have released the connection.

8 (Original). The method of claim 5 including monitoring the connection for a connection failure.

9 (Original). The method of claim 5 including receiving a request from a client for a connection and determining whether a connection has already been established.

10 (Original). The method of claim 5 including providing a state machine having a busy state when the connection is being used by a client and an idle state when the connection is not being used by a client.

Claims 11-14 (Canceled).

15 (Original). An article comprising a medium storing instructions that enable a processor-based system to:

allow at least two software clients to use a connection to the Internet at the same time;

determine when both clients have released the connection; and

discontinue the connection when both clients have released the connection.

16 (Original). The article of claim 15 further storing instructions that enable the processor-based system to enable the clients to connect to the Internet through a software layer and use the layer to accommodate at least two different types of Internet connections.

17 (Original). The article of claim 15 further storing instructions that enable the processor-based system to monitor the connection so that the connection is not released until all clients using the connection have released the connection.

18 (Original). The article of claim 15 further storing instructions that enable the processor-based system to monitor the connection for a connection failure.

19 (Original). The article of claim 15 further storing instructions that enable the processor-based system to receive a request from a client for a connection and to determine whether a connection has already been established.

20 (Original). The article of claim 15 further storing instructions that enable the processor-based system to implement a state machine having a busy state when a connection is being used by the client and an idle state when the connection is not being used by the client.

Claims 21-24 (Canceled).

25 (Original). A system comprising:

a processor;

an interface to enable a connection to the Internet; and

a storage storing instructions that enable at least two software clients to use a connection to the Internet at the same time, determine when both clients have released the connection and discontinue the connection when both clients have released the connection.

26 (Original). The system of claim 25 wherein said storage stores instructions that enable the client to connect to the Internet through a software layer and use the layer to accommodate at least two different types of Internet connections.

27 (Original). The system of claim 25 wherein said storage stores instructions to enable the system to monitor the connection so that the connection will not be released until all clients using the connection have released the connection.

28 (Original). The system of claim 25 wherein said storage stores instructions to monitor the connection for a connection failure.

29 (Original). The system of claim 25 wherein said storage stores instructions to enable the system to receive a request from a client for a connection and to determine whether a connection has already been established.

30 (Original). The system of claim 25 wherein said storage stores instructions to implement a state machine having a busy state when a connection is being used by a client and an idle state when the connection is not being used by a client.